

## IN THE CLAIMS

1. (canceled)

2. (currently amended) A method of screening for therapeutic agents useful in the treatment of a disease selected from the group consisting of ~~cardiovascular diseases~~, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, ~~cancer~~, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising the steps of:

- i) determining activity of a NPEPPS polypeptide comprising the amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2 at a certain first concentration of a test compound or in the absence of said test compound, and
- ii) determining the activity of said polypeptide at a second different concentration of said test compound; and
- iii) identifying the test compound as useful in the treatment of the disease if it regulates the activity of the NPEPPS polypeptide.

3-23. (canceled)

24. (new) A method of screening for therapeutic agents useful in the treatment of a disease selected from the group consisting of dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation, and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising the steps of:

- i) determining activity of a NPEPPS polypeptide comprising the amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2 in the absence of said test compound,

- ii) determining the activity of said polypeptide in the presence of said test compound; and
  - iii) identifying the test compound as useful in the treatment of the disease if it regulates the activity of the NPEPPS polypeptide.